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By STAN CARTER

Washington, April 1—Walt Whitman Rostow, described by President Johnson as "one of the most original thinkers that I know," moved today into McGeorge Bundy's former office in the basement of the White House.

But only the furnishings were the same. The "Little State Department" that Bundy ran for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson has been, in effect, dismantled.

At the same time the striped-pants diplomats in Foggy Bottom have been given a boost.

The process had been going on gradually for a long time. It came into the open after Bundy's departure from the White House Feb. 28 to become president of the Ford Foundation. The extent of the change became clear yesterday when Johnson described Rostow's new duties.

Bundy's title was special assistant to the President for national security affairs—a job created by Kennedy, who cared little for protocol or administrative lines of organization.

William D. Carey, executive assistant director of the Budget Bureau who analyzes administrative operations, once described the duties of the national security affairs staff in the White House basement this way:

"The Bundy group works with a minimum of paperwork, keeping their fingers on the troublesome points of defense and foreign policy, being sure they are in the stream of intelligence but in no sense in the line between the President and the heads of State or Defense."

In practice under Kennedy, Bundy often had more influence on foreign policy decisions than Secretary of State Rusk.

Bundy continued to play a key role for Johnson, both as idea man and policy coordinator.

Johnson Operates Through Chain of Command

But Johnson—unlike Kennedy, who frequently bypassed his Cabinet officers when he thought it would speed a decision—punctiliously worked through the chain of command. He increasingly sought the foreign policy advice of both Rusk and Defense Secretary McNamara.

Rostow, who had been Bundy's deputy during the first year of the Kennedy Administration, was among a handful of likely choices for the White House foreign policy job.



Walt Whitman Rostow
Based in the basement

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An economist, historian and World War II major in the OSS, he moved from the White House to the State Department in December, 1961, as counselor and chairman of the policy planning council—a job involving long-range foreign policy planning and giving advice to the Secretary of State.

Rostow, 49, has been accused of being "soft on Communism" because of his attendance just after the 1960 election at the dove sixth annual Pugwash Conference of scholars in Moscow. It was reported a few months afterward—but never confirmed—that he had been on a secret mission for President-elect Kennedy seeking the release of two American fliers whose RB-47 reconnaissance plane had been shot down off the Soviet coast. Nikita Khrushchev released the fliers after Kennedy's inauguration.

According to insiders, the advice dispensed by Rostow at the White House and State Department during the past five years has been hawk-like.

He Recommended Bombing of North Viet Nam

He was one of the first advocates of taking a hard line in Viet Nam, following a trip he made there with Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor in 1961, and later recommended both sending American combat troops there and bombing North Viet Nam.

Johnson said that Rostow's work at the White House would be "principally, but not necessarily exclusively, in the field of foreign policy . . . I shall look to him as a catalyst for ideas and programs on the various continents of the world."

However, the President did not give Rostow Bundy's title of special assistant for national security affairs. He will be just called a special assistant to the President, as will be former NBC President Robert E. Kintner, who also was named to the White House staff yesterday.

Asked whether Rostow would take over "all or many of the duties and assignments" that Bundy had handled, the President said: "That would be inaccurate. It would not be true. Most of the men play any position here, we hope."

Johnson then said Bundy's former duties were being apportioned among several members of the White House staff—including Press Secretary Bill Moyers and special assistants Jack Valenti and Robert W. Komer.

Title as Long as Here to Saigon

Komer, a 44-year-old former CIA man, has just gone to Saigon after having been given the title of "special assistant to the President for peaceful reconstruction in Viet Nam." He has a smaller office than Rostow in the downstairs area of the White House.

As significant as the changes at the White House was Johnson's memorandum on March 4—in the same week that Bundy left—setting up a new committee called the Senior Interdepartmental Group (dubbed SIG) to coordinate foreign operations of all government agencies under State Department leadership.

It was undoubtedly true that SIG would have been established whether Bundy stayed or left and the final foreign policy decisions will be made by the President, with the advice of White House staffers and others. Nevertheless, the reorganization gave Rusk and his top aid, Undersecretary of State George Ball, increased responsibility for the day-to-day conduct of foreign operations.

Johnson made clear he'll remain boss after reading a report this week—which probably was true until the President saw it on the news tickers—that Deputy Undersecretary of State U. Alexis Johnson was going to succeed Edwin O. Reischauer as ambassador to Japan. Johnson thereupon told reporters not to take seriously "some kid's statement over at the State Department."